

Elephants: Perfect or Pests?

What comes to mind when you think of an elephant? Elephants are often perceived to be fun, loving, and kind creatures. Many of us living in the Western World have seen elephants at a zoo, or at a circus. Elephants are social creatures. They hug by wrapping their large trunks around each other. Just like many young children suck their thumbs, an elephant calf will suck his trunk for comfort. Elephants live together in families just like we do. They also have a fantastic memory.

Elephants are large animals. Because of their size, adult elephants have no predators except humans. Calves, however, may fall prey to crocodiles, lions and other meat eaters. Humans hunt adult elephants for their valuable ivory tusks. This is called poaching. Poaching is illegal, however, it is still a big problem in Africa.

Many people consider elephants to be perfect creatures, however if you ask the people of Kenya, they will tell you a different story. To them, an elephant is a 6-ton garden pest, and a wrecking ball that kills, tramples, and terrifies people. Conservationists say this is a worrisome trend: conflict exists in Africa between humans and wildlife, particularly with elephants.

Kenya, Africa is currently experiencing a booming population that has encroached on the countries' national parks. Towns are being built in the middle of elephant migration paths. Now, when elephants travel these paths they trample over towns. Many times they ruin houses, gardens, and schools. They have also been known to trample and kill people. People of the towns have become fearful and angry. Some people want to destroy the elephants.

Do the people of Kenya have a right to be angry at the elephants? Do the elephants have the right to trample and ruin towns? What would you do to solve this problem?